

Thomas Jefferson to Washington, D.C., Commissioners, March 6, 1792, with Statements, from Thomas Jefferson and the National Capital. Edited by Saul K. Padover.

Jefferson to Commissioners JEFFERSON TO MESSRS. JOHNSON, CARROL, AND STEWART

Philadelphia, March 6, 1792.

Gentlemen:

It having been found impracticable to employ Major L'Enfant about the federal city, in that degree of subordination which was lawful and proper, he has been notified that his services are at an end. It is now proper that he should receive the reward of his past services; and the wish that he should have no just cause of discontent, suggests that it should be liberal. The President thinks of two thousand five hundred, or three thousand dollars; but leaves the determination to you. Ellicot is to go on, the week after the next, to finish laying off the plan on the ground, and surveying and platting the district.²⁹ I have remonstrated with him on the excess of five dollars a day and his expenses, and he has proposed striking off the latter; but this also is left to you, and to make the allowance retrospective. He is fully apprised that he is entirely under your orders, and there will be no person employed but under your orders. The enemies of this enterprise will take advantage of the retirement of L'Enfant, to trumpet an abortion of the whole. This will require double exertions, to be counteracted. I enclose you the project of a loan which is agreed on, if you approve it. Your answer will be immediately expected, and is kept entirely secret, till the subscriptions are actually opened. With this money, in aid of your other funds, the works may be pushed with such spirit as to evince to the world that they will not be relaxed.

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29 On Feb. 17, 1792, L'Enfant wrote to Tobias Lear: "I daily attended the progress of the business in all its stages until Mr. Andrew Ellicott gave me to understand that he was ordered by Mr. Jefferson to attend himself to that business in consequence of which he had already agreed with an engraver, this determined me to concern myself no more about it being confident that the meaning of Mr. Jefferson's order to Mr. Ellicott could not be to publish the plan without my knowledge or concurrence, and convinced that it would not be completely finished without recourse to the large map in my possession."

The immediate employment of a superintendent, of activity and intelligence equal to the nature of his functions and the public expectations, becomes important. You will, doubtless, also consider it as necessary to advertise immediately for plans of the Capitol and President's house. The sketch of an advertisement for the plan of a Capitol, which Mr. Johnson had sent to the President, is now returned with some alterations, and one also for a President's house. Both of them are subject to your pleasure, and when accommodated to that, if you will [P. 145, RECORDS, COLUMBIA HISTORICAL SOCIETY, Vol. 2.] return them, they shall be advertised here and elsewhere. The President thinks it of primary importance to press the providing as great quantities of brick, stone, lime, plank, timber, &c., this year as possible. It will occur to you that the stone should be got by a skilful hand. Knowing what will be your funds, you will be able to decide which of the following works had better be undertaken for the present year.

The cellars of both houses.

The foundations of one, or both.

Bridge over Rock Creek, and the post road brought over it.

Canal.

Wharves.

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The affair of Mr. Carrol, of Duddington's house, seems to call for settlement. The President thinks the most just course would be, to rebuild the house in the same degree, using the same materials as far as they will go, and supplying what are destroyed or rendered unfit; so that the

effect will be in fact, only the removal of the house within his lot, and in a position square with the streets. Do you not think it would be expedient to take measures for importing a number of Germans and Highlanders? This need not be to such an extent as to prevent the employment of eastern laborers, which is eligible for particular reasons. If you approve of the importation of Germans and have a good channel for it, you will use it, of course. If you have no channel, I can help you to one. Though Roberdeau's conduct has been really blamable, yet we suppose the principal object of the arrest was to remove him off the ground. As the prosecution of him to judgment might give room to misrepresentation of the motives, perhaps you may think it not amiss to discontinue the proceedings. You will receive herewith a packet of papers, among which are several projects and estimates which have been given in by different persons, and which are handed on to you, not as by any means carrying with them any degree of approbation, but merely, that if you find anything good in them, you may convert it to some account. Some of these contain the views of L'Enfant.

I have the honor to be, with the most perfect esteem and respect, gentlemen, your most obedient, and most humble servant.

[Pp. 336–8, WRITINGS OF JEFFERSON, Washington, Vol. III.]

Received a Letter from the Secretary of State, advising of Majr L'Enfant's dismissal—inclosing the project of a Loan, a copy of an Advertizement for the plan of a Capitol and presidents house—proposing particular objects of attention, &c.

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[P. 80, Proceedings of the Commissioners, Vol. I, 1791–5, in the National Archives.]

A Premium of 500 dollars, or a Medal of that value, at the option of the party, will be given by the Commissioners of the federal buildings to the person who before the—day of—next shall produce to them the most approved plan for a President's house to be erected in the city of Washington & territory of Columbia. The site of the building, if the artist will attend to it, will of course influence the aspect & outline of his plan, & its destination of the building will point out to the artist him the number, size & distribution of the apartments, it will be a recommendation of any plan that if the central part of it may be detached & erected for the present, with the appearance of a complete whole, and the other parts added be capable of admitting the additional parts in future if they shall be wanting.

[March 6, 1792: enclosed in Jefferson's letter to the Commissioners on that date.]

[Ms., *Jefferson Papers*, Library of Congress.]

Pencilled note by President Washington at the bottom of Jefferson's draft: "I see nothing wanting but to fill the blanks, and that I presume the Comrs. will do, unless, after the words 'destination of the buidling' is added 'and situation of the ground' for I think particular situation wd. require parlr. kind or shaped buildings." [P. 500, WRITINGS OF WASHINGTON, Fitzpatrick, Vol. 31.]